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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development, implementation, and results of an intercultural training program for the students of the Marriott School of Management (MSM) at Brigham Young University, Utah. Complaints from MSM international students that they felt some sense of abandonment by MSM and the university promoted a research study on international students' needs, concerns, and problems in general and specifically at Brigham Young. Based on the results of this research, the International Student Orientation Program, a mandatory 2-week, international student orientation seminar/workshop for all first-year international students, was developed to help meet these identified needs. Surveys of the students at the end of the seminar/workshop and the faculty members during the first year of implementation provided the following results: (1) the international students are integrating more effectively with other students; (2) they are interacting in classroom settings and are bridging classroom cultural differences; (3) rankings of international students are higher than in previous years; (4) they possess stronger feelings of security because of the support systems in place; (5) they show a greater success of job placement for both summer internships and full-time jobs; and (6) they are developing more positive relationships and are experiencing an overall more positive experience at the school. (GLR)

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN A U. S. GRADUATE BUSINESS PROGRAM: CULTURES, SUBCULTURES, AND THE NEW STUDENT

Prepared For

TENTH ANNUAL EMU CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION FOR WORLD BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JANET HOWARD

Janet Howard is an assistant professor in Management Communication at Brigham Young University. Her interest in international students began many years ago as she noted the strengths, weaknesses, and struggles of her undergraduate international students. Her travels to the Middle East and to the Far East have enhanced her ability to empathize with her international students.

She is Director of International Graduate Students within the Marriott School of Management at Brigham Young University, and she serves on the Executive Committee of the Brigham Young University/University of Utah Collaborative Center for International Business Education.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF REBA KEELE

Reba Keele is a professor of Organizational Behavior at Brigham Young University. Her interest in international students started when she was a participant in the W. K. Kellogg Fellow to Study Cross-Cultural Leadership (1985-1988). As a part of this group, she traveled to Latin American and Far East Countries.

She is active professionally and is a consultant to many firms, many of them multicultural organizations.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN A U. S. GRADUATE BUSINESS PROGRAM:

CULTURES, SUBCULTURES, AND THE NEW STUDENT

Background

Interest in foreign students enrolled in American universities and colleges is a recent phenomenon. In the past, faculty, American students, and staff more or less ignored these students. The foreign students had to ferret through the system and the courses without much, if any, help from others.

Since World War II, the world has slowly evolved into a global world. This development has created an increased influx of international students across the campuses of American universities and colleges. These students want to be a part of the educational system of a world-power country. In addition, as American universities and colleges have directed their curricula to the global world, they have opened their doors to more international enrollments. With these series of events, the international student can no longer be ignored.

Changes create new environments, and inherent in these environments are advantages and disadvantages. The increase in international students on American campuses, although positive in many ways, is creating a number of concerns and problems for educational institutions.

The concerns and problems that have the greatest impact upon international students while on American campuses are the following:

1. Foreign students' countries. Many of these students come from third-world countries that have very weak and volatile governments. These students are impacted by government changes in policies, by political upheavals, and by acts of God within their countries.

   A good example of a political upheaval, and its effects upon students in America, was exemplified in the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident in China. Students from China who were and still are on American campuses and who made their political stance known cannot return to China for fear of being reprimanded. These situations often require acts of Congress to protect the students who are involved, therefore, placing the United States in a precarious political situation and in a nurturing role. The universities become involved through the rippling effect.

2. Financial needs. Changes in policies, political upheavals, and Acts of God often impact students' financial

security--funds are discontinued, parents can no longer support their children, money can no longer flow from the country, or the exchange rate deteriorates, thus leaving students without sufficient funds.

In addition, many international students come to America penniless. The universities then have hard decisions to make. Do they send them home, or do they provide them with scholarships and loans. If loans are decided upon, the administration is quite sure, based upon previous experiences, the majority of the loans will never be repaid; therefore, the loans become gifts.

If the program requires internship experience and/or if the students need summer jobs for additional financial support, the university finds itself in the role of an employment agency. Many international students have difficulty with the English language, which creates an obstacle to gainful employment.

3. Academic abilities. International students are admitted to American campuses based upon their scores from the required national and TOEFL examinations. Accepted scores on these examinations do not guarantee academic success. These tests do not measure the following students' skills and abilities that are vital to success within an educational system:

   a. language abilities to communicate effectively in oral or written communique

   b. adequate skills in intercultural communication

   c. abilities to engage in effective group work

   d. aptitudes in taking timed tests

   e. capabilities to handle cultural differences

   f. vulnerability to prejudices and perceptions of fellow students and of faculty members

   g. adaptabilities to different styles of classroom instruction, of communication, of thought patterns, and of different cultures (new foods, climates, housing, status shock, stereotyping)

Because these students were ignored in the past, administrations did not develop and put into place policies, procedures, and programs to direct and assist international students through the American educational system. Therefore, international students

to varying degrees were leaving American campuses weary, battle worn, and with feelings of degradation and of inferiority. These emotions seemed especially true on our campus at Brigham Young University.

Research

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) is the owner and sponsor of Brigham Young University (BYU). The Church's male members at the age of 19 (and some female members at the age of 21) voluntarily spend two years on missions for the Church. Therefore, 83 percent of the student population enrolled in graduate programs within the Marriott School of Management (MSM) are returned missionaries. Eighty-four percent of the graduate studentbody of MSM are bilingual.

In the school year 1990-1991, the MSM graduate programs (MBA, MOB, MACC, ManEC, MPA, IM) have 584 students in the first- and second-years of their programs. Of these 584 students, 71 are international students. Of the 71 international students, 38 are first-year students. These figures represent an increase of 46 students from 1987. The attached appendix shows the breakdown of students according to programs, countries, and year in program.

This environment, along with the changing emphasis to a global world and market and with an increased international graduate studentbody, created a natural and positive setting for a strong international focus within the business graduate programs. However, the Marriott School of Management did not have programs in place that would assist the graduate students in dealing with and overcoming the obstacles of a new environment with its many inherent differences.

Prominent international students from Hong Kong and other countries, who have graduated from MSM's graduate programs, communicated that they felt some sense of abandoment by the MSM and the university.

Therefore, the MSM graduate programs needed an intercultural training program for its international graduate students. To determine the structure and content of this program, Janet Howard and Reba Keele conducted research on international students' concerns, needs, and problems in general and specifically at BYU. A portion of the research was conducted and compiled by Cheng-I Emma Ying, a master student from Taiwan who was majoring in Organizational Behavior within the MSM.

In addition, information was gathered from Howard and Keele's survey of international students. Professors within the MSM graduate programs were also interviewed to get their perspective of international students' needs and problems.

Based upon this research, the following needs, concerns, and problems of MSM's international students were identified:

1. Changes within the international students' countries definitely do affect the students' abilities to function effectively within the educational environment.

2. Financial needs are critical with many of the international students.

3. The students' academic abilities are (1) crippled and restricted because of cultural differences within and outside of the classroom setting, (2) intercultural communication is difficult and less effective because of language abilities (English Proficiency). This hindrance is often interpreted by American students and professors as a sign of being intellectually incapable.

4. Tests with time limits are particularly devastating to international students. Their English abilities and their thinking patterns are obstacles to taking tests effectively.

5. An understanding of at least four distinct cultures is required of the international graduate students: (a) the United States, (b) the Utah but specifically Provo/Orem community (c) the BYU/MSM, (d) the religious settings, with a dominant Mormon membership, within the Utah/Provo-Orem and BYU/MSM demographic settings.

6. The specific cultural aspects that were emphasized from the results of the research are the following:

   (a) Provo-Orem/BYU
   (b) Professor/student
   (c) Student/student
   (d) Classroom instruction
   (e) Fields and levels of study
   (f) New food (an inability to locate native food)
   (g) Climate
   (h) Housing facilities
   (i) Homesickness
   (j) Status shock (someone to no one)
   (k) Treated as stereotypes rather than as individuals (Japanese, Chinese, etc. rather than Emma, John, Larry, etc.)
   (l) American students' low-level knowledge of and interest in other countries and the people of those countries
   (m) Thought patterns of international students (Low context vs High Context, Concrete vs Abstract, Direct vs Indirect)
   (n) Differences in communication styles (appropriate topics, competition, how long to talk at each turn,

just talking, differing with professors, whether and where to touch, how much silence is acceptable. The students felt that the preceding factors give rise to misunderstandings between students and faculty members as well as fellow students.

Based upon this general and specific research information, an International Student Orientation program was structured to achieve the following objectives:

--help the international graduate students within the MSM
  (1) bridge the cultural environment
  (2) communicate effectively in the classroom setting and in their oral and written work
  (3) have a positive experience at BYU

Structure of the International Student Orientation Program

To help meet the needs and to help resolve the problems of international graduate students at BYU within the MSM, Howard and Keele designed the International Student Orientation program as follows:

1. a mandatory two-week preschool international student orientation seminar/workshop for all first-year international students (whether English speaking or bilingual)

2. the course content contains the following units:
   --culture (American, BYU/Utah)
   --language
   --writing/speaking
   --group work
   --case analysis (general information and format of case analysis and specific cases studied and analyzed by professors within the graduate programs)
   --classroom instruction
   --graduate program orientations
   --first- and second-year student interaction (without faculty)
     The second-year students are comprised of both international and American students. Spouses are invited to attend.
   --financial aid
   --library tours
   --campus tours
   --discussion with BYU International Student Center Advisor
     Topics such as immigration requirements and dos and don'ts were discussed

--discussion with local credit union officers
Topics such as banking needs and facilities available to students
--International Student Association
--grading at BYU
--working in the USA

3. Structured social activities included a luncheon held each day of the two-week seminar/workshop. American and second-year students, staff personnel, and faculty members were invited to each luncheon. These people mingled and conversed with the new international students before, during, and after the luncheon.

   A closing social was held at which faculty, second-year international students, and the new first-year international students were invited. The spouses and children of all were also in attendance.

4. A consulting lab staffed by a second-year international MBA student is available to all graduate international students. The students receive help with course content as well as assistance with writing papers.

5. Structural changes included appointing Janet Howard as Director of International Graduate Students; and in this role, she is another support system for the international graduate students.

6. The Graduate Career Development Office serves the students in getting summer internships after the first year and in getting full-time jobs upon graduation. A database is maintained for international students that lists multinational and international companies around the world.

Results of program

Based upon a survey of the students at the end of the seminar/workshop and during these first two semesters and upon a survey of faculty members during this first year, the following results have been gathered:

1. The international students are integrating more effectively with other students.

2. The international students are interacting in classroom settings and are bridging classroom cultural differences.

3. The rankings of international students, though spread throughout the population, are higher than in previous years.

4. The international students have stronger feelings of security because of the support systems in place.

5. The international students are having a greater success of job placement for both summer internships and full-time jobs.

6. Faculty members, native American students, and international students are developing more positive relationships.

7. A very strong comradery and support system is intact among the first-year international graduate students.

8. International students as a whole are having a more positive, than ever before, experience at BYU.

The preschool international student orientation workshop/seminar does not by any means solve all problems and meet all needs facing international students. However, the support systems are now in place that alleviate, and in many situations eliminate, problems faced by international graduate students within the MSM.

MARRIOTT SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROFILE

Master of Business Administration	No. of students
First-Year Students	23
Second-Year Students	21
Master of Organizational Behavior	
First-Year Students	4
Secone-Year Students	2
Master of Public Administration	
First-Year Students	3
Second-Year Students	0
Master of Accountancy	
First-Year Students	9
Second-Year Students	5
Master of Management Economics	
First-Year Students	1
Second-Year Students	0
Master of Information Management	
First-Year Students	0
Second-Year Students	3

Countries

Argentina
Brazil
Canada
Chile
China
England
Ghana
Honduras
Hong Kong
India
Israel
Japan
Korea
Macao
Mexico
New Zealand
Norway
Peru
Singapore
Taiwan
Venezuela